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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [KWMN](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [PHUM](#) [XL](#)
SUBJECT: ST. VINCENT NOMINATION FOR 2009 INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN OF COURAGE AWARD

REF: SECSTATE 99729

SUMMARY

¶1. (U) I am pleased to nominate Nicole O.M. Sylvester, lawyer and human rights activist from St. Vincent, for the Secretary's Award for International Women of Courage for 2009 (biodata at end of cable). Nicole is an accomplished lawyer and president of the St. Vincent Human Rights Association. In both capacities, she recently represented a local woman who made rape accusations against the Prime Minister of St. Vincent. During the 10-month legal battle against the government establishment that ensued, Ms. Sylvester found herself and her children in potential danger of government reprisal. Nicole Sylvester is a brave and courageous woman who fought for the rights of the alleged victim against a well entrenched government establishment. Her efforts may have been ultimately unsuccessful, but everyone in St. Vincent knows Nicole Sylvester will do everything her power to hold all accountable to the law, up to and including the Prime Minister.

LONG LEGAL BATTLE

¶2. (U) This case was an up hill legal battle from the beginning. Nicole Sylvester, on behalf of the alleged victim, filed criminal charges against Prime Minister Gonsalves in late January 2008. The charges were discontinued by the Director of Public Prosecutions, a long time friend of the Prime Minister. The discontinuation was challenged in the St. Vincent High Court and the Eastern Caribbean Court of Appeals; however both challenges were defeated in June, 2008. Simultaneously, Ms. Sylvester filed documents in the family court system in an effort to continue the case, which dragged on for months. Eventually, the alleged victim dismissed Sylvester and other human rights lawyers and took on allies of the Prime Minister as legal counsel, and then left the country for fully-funded study in Canada.

THREATS AGAINST HER CHILDREN

¶3. (U) Throughout the 10-month ordeal, Nicole reported government threats and intimidation against herself and her two sons, ages 7 and 8. Within a week of taking the case, she was under government surveillance. On several occasions individuals with ties to the government and police confronted Nicole stating "You have two small children, and anything is possible while you are away," insinuating something could happen to her children while she traveled off St. Vincent. Fearing for the safety of her children, Nicole enlisted the help of trusted family members and friends to transport her

children to and from school, never leaving them alone in public. Nicole noticed government vehicles following her constantly. Her life became relegated to traveling back and forth to work and worrying about the security of her children.

OSTRACIZED FROM THE LEGAL ESTABLISHMENT

¶4. (U) Since the dismissal of the case, Nicole finds it increasingly difficult to accomplish day-to-day legal business. Ostracizing her from the legal establishment, the Attorney General and other court officials rarely return her phone calls or inquiries or take action on her legal matters, making it difficult to make a living. When asked if she would take the case again, though, Nicole commented "Absolutely. (The accuser) needed help, and I was her last resort for hope. If I said no, then all fails. People will have no faith in the rule of law and take the law into their own hands."

¶5. (U) BIODATA

Name: Nicole Othlyn Michelle Sylvester
Job title/ association: Lawyer and Human Rights Activist
Date of Birth: 13 Feb 1964
Country of Birth: Trinidad and Tobago
Citizenship: St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago
Address: P.O. Box Greenville St., Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines
Telephone: (784)-495-4134

Email: lawyers@svglawyers.com
Passport Number: R0052309

Nicole Sylvester has been contacted about this nomination and is willing to be recognized.
OURISMAN